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NATURAL MAGIC.

IN fingering that very small object, a shirt-stud, it is apt to elude the grasp and disappear. It has gone no one knows whither. You look about for it in all directions, but it is not to be seen. This is what we call Natural Magic. You have unconsciously performed a singularly clever trick, as good as any sleight-of-hand. It was, however, only an accident, and could not, without great study and experience, be done again. Of course, the little object has not vanished into empty space. It is lying quietly in a remote corner of the room, possibly concealed by the folds of a window-curtain, to which, in the twinkling of an eye, it was sent by a twist of the fingers; and there perhaps it is found some days afterwards by the housemaid. We mention this familiar incident by way of illustrating some of the ordinary tricks of conjurers. By light flexibility of fingers, and immense tact in distracting observation by amusing talk, they make things disappear in a manner so extraordinary and mysterious as to baffle comprehension. They only do by artifice what you accidentally effected with the shirt-stud. All depends on skill and velocity in giving the right twist to the fingers.

That is but one explanation of the profound art of the conjurers. They rely on the sentiment of wonder, and power of bamboozling the simpler order of mortals. Acute in observation, they occasionally excite surprise by correctness in guessing what are one's thoughts. We may give an example, which has come to our knowledge. Towards the end of last century, a conjurer, named Herman Boaz, travelled about the country, astonishing every one with his tricks. His shrewdness in guessing thoughts was remarkable. At one of his performances, at a town in the south of England, where a number of young ladies were present, he went round the room offering to tell people's thoughts. One young lady, who had formed a notion of rising next morning at five o'clock, changed her intention, and made up her mind to rise at seven. Passing her, and looking her in the

face, Boaz said complacently: 'You are quite right, miss; seven is a much better hour than five.' The young lady addressed never forgot this astonishing piece of conjuring. It was simply a happy coincidence in falling on the right idea. If the guess had been wrong, we should never have heard of it.

The art of the conjurer is of very old date. We hear of it in many ancient writings; the general belief always being that the tricks were performed through supernatural agency. Several clever conjurers ventured on appearing before public assemblies in England in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which was rather a bold thing to do, for the laws against witchcraft were still in force, and the poor conjurers, in trying to pick up a livelihood by their professional deceptions, ran the risk of perishing on the gallows or in the blaze of a tar-barrel. The fairs about London were usually frequented by these experts, some of whom are commemorated by Mr Frost in his very amusing volume, lately published, *The Lives of the Conjurers*. Flourishing as a contemporary of Boaz in the reign of George III., there was a juggler named Ray, who gained popularity in London. He appears to have employed a variety of jargon to give a sort of supernatural colour to his deceptions. 'He had once,' says Mr Frost, 'the honour of performing before the royal family, of which, on one occasion, an amusing anecdote is related. Ray desired the queen to say *Cockalorum* as the charm upon which, as he pretended, the success of the grand deception depended. The queen hesitated; upon which the king, who was eager to witness the conjurer's great trick, turned to her, and said good-humouredly: "Say *Cockalorum*, Charlotte; say *Cockalorum*."'

About the same period, Breslaw gave conjuring entertainments in London, and, like Ray, had the honour of performing before the king and queen and their young family. Breslaw had the candour to explain how he performed his tricks. In one of his advertisements, he announces that he will 'discover the following deceptions in such a manner

that every person in the company will be capable of doing them immediately for their amusement. First, to tell any lady or gentleman the card that they fix on, without asking questions. Second, to make a remarkable piece of money to fly out of any gentleman's hand into a lady's pocket-handkerchief, at two yards' distance. Third, to change four or five cards in any lady's or gentleman's hand several times into different cards. Fourth, to make a fresh egg fly out of any person's pocket into a box on the table, and immediately to fly back again into the pocket.' In his latter days, Breslaw offered to teach sleight-of-hand for a reasonable fee; and finally, on retiring from the profession, he, in 1784, published a small book explanatory of his conjuring tricks and apparatus.

At this time and a little later, conjurers did not in popular appreciation rank much above the grade of mountebanks. They still wore fantastic dresses, and made use of cockalorum, hocus-pocus, presto, begone, and other ridiculous jargon. The first who, in giving a tinge of science to the art of legdemain, rose to the character of a philosophic conjurer, was Katerfelto, who has been immortalised by the poet Cowper:

Katerfelto with his hair on end
At his own wonders, wondering for his bread.

Katerfelto was the son of a Prussian colonel of hussars. He had received a good education, but being of an erratic turn, he took to conjuring. After travelling for some years on the continent, giving entertainments at different courts, he appeared in London about 1781. With his tricks were intermingled harangues on mathematics, optics, magnetism, chemistry, hydrostatics, and other sciences. To aid his mystifications he exhibited a black cat, which was reputed to possess some wonderful qualities, which he took care to puff in the newspapers. The puff was of course anonymous. Sometimes it consisted of dreadful insinuations against the character of the black cat, which was represented as a demon in disguise. Having wrought up the public mind on the subject, Katerfelto would come out with an advertisement per contra, denouncing the disregard of truth in speaking of himself and his clever but very innocent cat. For instance, he issued an advertisement as follows: 'Katerfelto is sorry to find that writers [that is to say, his own puffs] in the newspapers have several times, and particularly within the last fortnight, asserted that he and his black cat are devils. On the contrary, Katerfelto professes himself to be nothing more than a moral and divine philosopher, a teacher in mathematics and natural philosophy; and that neither he nor his black cat bears any resemblance to devils, as they are represented in the printshops; and assures the nobility and public that the idea of him and his black cat being devils arises merely from the astonishing performances of Katerfelto and his said cat, which both in the days' and nights' exhibition are such as to induce all the spectators to believe them both to be devils indeed!—the black cat appearing in one instant with a tail, and the next without any, and which has occasioned many thousand pounds to be lost in wagers on this incomprehensible subject.'

Philip Astley, noted for his equestrian amphitheatre, is said to have begun life as a soldier, in which capacity, when on foreign service with his

regiment, he demonstrated his ability as a conjurer, by inventing the now famous gun-trick. This consists in pretending to fire a pistol loaded with ball, and catching the ball on the point of a knife. The explanation of the trick is, that in the first place the pistol is secretly loaded only with blank cartridge. In this harmless condition the conjurer slips into it a tin tube, which nicely fits it, and then ostentatiously loads it with ball. Before firing, the tin tube is dexterously removed, and when the weapon is fired, no harm ensues; by an instantaneous manœuvre the bullet is triumphantly exhibited as being caught in the required situation. It is related that Astley invented the trick to save the effusion of blood at the duel of two comrades in the army, for one of whom he acted as second. Succeeding in getting the other man's second to assent to the ingenious device, the duellists fired at each other without effect, and the affair was amicably adjusted. Very clever this. One might, however, say with Sir Walter Scott in his *Lay of the Last Minstrel*:

But scarce I praise their venturous part
Who tamper with such dangerous art.

Mr Frost mentions two instances in which the gun-trick proved fatal. One was that of a conjurer in Dublin who was shot dead, by the accidental substitution of a real loaded pistol for one in which the charge was withdrawn. The other took place in Germany, at the performance of a conjurer named De Linsky. He set up his wife to be fired at by six soldiers, each of whom was to bite the ball off his cartridge in charging his gun. Heedlessly, one of the soldiers did not bite off the ball, and Madame de Linsky was shot through the body. She died on the second day after the accident. The catastrophe clouded the latter years of the unfortunate conjurer.

Balsamo, a native of Sicily, who assumed the name of Cagliostro, flourished as a conjurer, or, more properly, as an impostor, about the year 1780, but was better known on the continent than in England. He did not confine himself to sleight-of-hand, but pretended to cure diseases, and to make old people young again. His fate was unfortunate. While in Paris, he was confined for some time to the Bastille, on suspicion of being concerned in the robbery of the famed diamond necklace of Marie Antoinette. Getting out of this scrape, he went to Rome, where, on account of his conjuring operations, he was condemned to death as a magician, but died in prison in 1795.

Some of the tricks of Cagliostro had in them a trace of science. He dealt in optical illusions; and although he was a regular charlatan, one cannot but regret the cruel way he was treated. By two successors, Comus and Robert—a couple of Frenchmen—tricks by means of concave mirrors were brought to considerable perfection. Performing in Paris, M. Robert declared he would raise from the dead any person whom the company pleased to name. It was proposed that he should bring up the spirit of Marat; and truly enough a phantom resembling that hideous revolutionary monster made its appearance, and immediately vanished. Effects of this kind, aided by a subdued light and some ghastly paraphernalia, are produced by the agency of lenses, concave mirrors, and miniature likenesses of the persons represented. In fact, much of the so-called

manifestations of modern spiritualism may be explained by optical illusions, such as were practised by M. Robert and his brother-conjurers.

We cannot, even in the briefest way, refer to the crowd of conjurers who, in later times, have entertained and astonished the public with their tricks. Only a few can be noticed. One of these was the well-remembered Anderson, a native of Aberdeenshire, who designated himself Wizard of the North. It is a rare thing to find a Scotchman filling the rôle of a showman, an actor, or a conjurer. Rising from a humble position, and poorly educated, Anderson began his career as a call-boy in a theatre, and with an aptitude for sleight-of-hand, along with a proper amount of audacity, he took up the profession of a conjurer, beginning with entertainments in small towns, and working his way up to high-class assemblages in London and elsewhere. He established his popularity by the neat and quiet way in which he performed a variety of new and bewildering tricks. In his later days he issued a kind of memoir of his life, from which, as we suppose, Mr Frost has drawn the following incident.

In the course of a professional excursion in the north, he visited Forres, and by the advice of his printer, took lodgings for a week at the house of an elderly widow, who expressed a wish that he should pay half the rent beforehand. Anderson made no objection, and handed her four half-crowns. Observing the words 'Great Wizard of the North' on the handle of his umbrella, the woman in trepidation asked who he was. On being told that he was a wizard, she ordered him to quit the house. At this moment the stage-coach was about to pass the door for Elgin, where the wizard had an engagement. As he was hurrying away, the woman threw his money on the floor, and fell down in a swoon, hurting herself in the fall. Some persons rushed in on hearing the fracas, and seized Anderson, to prevent his escape. Just then the coach drew up, and the driver was told that a murder had been committed. 'Leaping down, and looking through the window, he recognised Anderson, whom he had seen several times in Elgin. The coach started again; and Anderson, finding that he was in an awkward position, as the old lady gave no signs of life, demanded to be taken before a magistrate at once. This he was told was impossible, as there was no magistrate within seven miles; and all that could be done was to lodge him in the town jail until the next day. To the jail the conjurer was taken, therefore, between a couple of constables, who were commendably prompt in making their appearance. The coach went on to Elgin, where the guard lost no time in spreading the news of the Wizard's arrest, and going to the Assembly Rooms, told the audience, who were growing impatient at the conjurer's non-appearance, that "they might conjure for themselves that night, for there would be no Wizard, as he was where he would not get out with all his magic; he was in Forres jail, for murdering an old woman." A thrill of horror ran through the crowded auditory; then a murmur arose, and loud demands were made for the return of the money paid at the doors. This was done; and nothing was talked of at Elgin that night but the horrible murder at Forres. On the following morning, Anderson was conducted to the residence of the magistrate, where the widow, who had

recovered in the course of the night, told as much of the tragi-comical story as she knew. The gentleman who administered justice in that remote district smiled at the old lady's narrative, reproved the witnesses for their hastiness, and at once discharged Anderson, with an expression of regret for the inconvenience and loss to which his detention had subjected him. The news of the *dénouement* of the affair reached Elgin as soon as Anderson, for whom it proved an excellent advertisement, bringing crowds to the Assembly Rooms, and inducing him to prolong his stay in that town several nights beyond the term he had intended.'

Anderson deservedly made a fortune by his performances at home and abroad. While in the United States he discovered the impostures of the Spiritualists that were driving people mad, and relentlessly exposed them in his entertainments. 'I caused my table,' says he, 'to rap as loudly and intelligently as theirs, while I hesitated not to reveal the nature and *modus operandi* of the "spirits" which produced the rappings.' For this good service he deserved the thanks of society. Anderson died two or three years ago.

Every one knows that jugglery is carried to a high pitch of perfection by natives of India. We have some notice of their marvellous tricks in Mr Frost's entertaining volume. The Chinese are also clever at conjuring, especially as regards sleight-of-hand. A few years ago we saw a Chinese perform a dexterous manoeuvre, which it was painful to witness. He appeared on the stage with his belt stuck full of table-knives with sharp points, and was accompanied by his son, a boy of nine or ten years of age. Placing the boy against a broad wooden plank, he began, at the distance of six feet, to throw knives at him; causing these sharp instruments by a particular jerk to stick in the wood all round the boy. The feat was rapidly executed, but with apparent ease and indifference. Not one of the knives touched the boy, though some of them stuck in the board very near him. As they were projected with considerable force, any hit would have been fatal. The reflection raised at sight of this extraordinary exhibition, was that the man must have spent half a lifetime in training his hand and eye for the performance. Hazlitt, it may be remembered, has an interesting essay on the dexterity of Indian jugglers in throwing up a number of balls and catching them successively, and the enormous amount of study that must have been expended in attaining such proficiency. Everybody will say that the loss of time in studies of this nature is most wasteful. But looked at broadly in relation to natural aptitudes, it would seem to be pretty much a matter of taste whether a man shall spend seven years in learning to poise perpendicularly on the point of his nose a tall stick with a dinner-plate pirouetting on the top of it, or in qualifying himself for one of the learned professions. Conjuring, possibly, 'pays' as well as anything else.

We occasionally see clever conjurers of the mountebank order in the by-streets of London—the police taking care to keep them out of the main thoroughfares—but they are far and away excelled by the conjurers who establish themselves for popular entertainment behind little tables in the Champs-Élysées. We are inclined to think that, somehow, conjuring comes natural to a Frenchman. He possesses the requisite amount

of light-heartedness and loquacity. In Paris, conjurers are a kind of *artistes*. They are asked to attend festive parties for the general amusement. When the Duke of Wellington, at the head of the allied army, was supreme in Paris, immediately after the battle of Waterloo, he invited a large evening-party to the mansion he occupied in the Place Louis XV. On consideration, he found that the house could not contain all who were expected to attend. 'Cover over the garden,' said a friend whom he consulted, 'and invite a conjurer to entertain the company.' The hint was taken; and through the performances of the conjurer in the garden, the party went off with immense *éclat*. This incident was related to us by the late Mr James Simpson, an Edinburgh advocate, who visited and wrote about the field of Waterloo, and had the good fortune to be present at the famous garden-party of 'Le Grand Vellington,' as the Parisians were pleased to call him.

Among the later conjurers of note, there have been several foreigners, Döbler, Frikell, Bosco, and Houdin—ordinarily called Robert-Houdin. We happen to have seen them all, and in particular can speak with approbation of the elegantly adroit performances of Houdin. This clever Frenchman, who spoke English fluently, travelled about with his wife, who was an accessory in his entertainments. For example he would declare that Madame, while seated blindfold in the middle of the stage, would describe any small article that was handed to him. Responding to his request, one of the spectators would hand him a brooch, another a ring, a third a pencil-case, and so on. Every article was faithfully described to all appearance by the blindfolded lady, which caused no small degree of wonder; but in reality she never spoke at all. She only moved her lips; while her husband, holding and looking at the article in his hand, by means of ventriloquism caused the words to come apparently from her mouth. The trick was exceedingly well performed.

In the course of his travels, Houdin visited Algiers, and there astonished the native Arabs with his performance of the gun-trick, which he did in a way somewhat peculiar. At one of his entertainments an old Arab admitted that Monsieur was doubtless a great magician, but he should prefer to use one of his own pistols. Houdin said this might be done next day, after he had invoked the powers to assist him. It was a severe trial of skill, for there was some danger in dealing with a wary and suspicious barbarian. Next day, the exploit came off. Houdin only stipulated that he should be allowed to load the pistol, the Arab handing him a leaden bullet from a saucerful from which to make his choice. This was agreed to. Houdin, as every one thought, dropped the leaden bullet into the pistol; but instead of doing so, he dropped a previously prepared sham bullet, which dissolved into dust on being fired. 'Now,' said the conjurer to the Arab, 'take the pistol, and fire at me, and I will catch the bullet in my mouth.' The pistol was fired; and to the profound amazement of the crowd of Arabs, Houdin took a leaden bullet out of his mouth, which all admitted to be the bullet that had been selected from the saucerful. To still further astonish the company, Houdin declared that by loading with another leaden ball he would bring blood out of a stone wall. All were eager to see this wonderful feat. It was

performed in a way differing little from what had already taken place. Instead of dropping a real ball into the pistol, Houdin used a sham bullet filled with a red liquid, which dissolved on striking the wall. Wonder tremendous! We believe that Anderson in his gun-tricks was similarly in the habit of substituting light composition balls for real bullets, and was equally successful. It was all a matter of sleight-of-hand.

The latest and most surprising piece of Natural Magic has been what is usually called Pepper's Ghost, though it was exhibited years previously, in Paris, by the French conjurer Robin. The thing, however, is so simple and so obvious that we cannot doubt it had been employed—perhaps imperfectly—ages ago in the conjuring repertory. Every one must have noticed a very ordinary phenomenon. A fire burning in a room is at a certain angle reflected in the glass of the window. Passing through the glass, the rays are refracted or bent aside, and the image of the fire is seen blazing on a bush or other object outside. Such is the principle on which the so-called Pepper's Ghost is made a subject of wonder to an assemblage of people. Shrouding the lights, to give the required dimness, a glass screen is lowered in front of the stage, on which the ghost is to appear; the ghost being nothing more than the reflection of a person performing out of sight of the spectators—probably at a point in front of the glass, or even under the stage. The recent manufacture of large sheets of plate-glass has immensely facilitated the trick. As none of the spectators, on account of the crepuscular light, can see the glass, the simulation is complete. A ghost seems to be walking about the stage, which the actors affect to see or to grasp, of course without effect, and the marvel is to all appearance incomprehensible. On the like principle, is sometimes shewn a 'magic head,' which answers questions, also a variety of other tricks or optical illusions. w. c.

FALLEN FORTUNES.

CHAPTER XXV.—SECOND CLASS.

THE divines talk to us of 'precious time'; and from their point of view, no doubt our time should be more precious, and we should be less willing to waste it, than gold itself. Business men also protest with more or less of truth (generally the latter) that their time is precious, and would have us believe that every quarter of an hour by which their morning train is delayed costs them, or their clients, thousands; and even outside those two callings, there are many instances in which the passing hour may be designated by the same endearing epithet. But after all, there is no time so precious to the human heart as that which intervenes between the signature of the death-warrant of some beloved fellow-creature and the carrying it into effect. When the kindly doctor is compelled to whisper, 'No hope,' and husband, or wife, or child lie on that bed which they will for certain only exchange for their place in the churchyard, then time becomes precious indeed. How we grudge every moment that we are forced to pass away from that beloved object whom we shall never, never see again! How we feel that a week hence, or a day, we shall bitterly regret the hours—cumulatively years—that we have lived apart from them, out of their sight, beyond their voice and touch, when we

might have been in their company. How every stroke of the clock sounds like a parting knell! And thus as the time drew on for John Dalton to set sail for Brazil, each day became inexpressibly dear and all too brief for his unhappy wife. It was a long journey, full of doubt and hazard, even for him; but for her it was the longest that mortal man can take; for she knew well, though no tongue had told her, but only the wordless whisper of her own prescient heart, that she would never behold him more in this world. Her health had been failing her for long, though no one knew it beside herself; she had been always one to make light of her troubles, in order the better to persuade others to let her help them to bear their own; 'her worst she kept, her best she gave' of everything; but she had for some time looked forward to her coming trial with a grave suspicion that her strength was insufficient to meet it. And now this crushing blow had fallen, and she felt that it had paralysed all her rallying powers; her courage remained with her—it was necessary for others, and therefore only death could rob her of it; but her vital energies were gone.

Hers was not a solitary case. Doubtless, while I write these words, there are hundreds, perhaps thousands of women, wives and mothers, who know that their fate is sealed, but keep the secret to themselves, for others' sake, and look upon the passing world with smiling serenity. Another autumn, perhaps even another winter, they may see on earth, but not another spring. They hear plans made for the future which include themselves, and they appear to fall in with them. They will not cast a shadow over the present happiness, the present hope of those around them; but they are well aware, by the time of which these loved ones speak with such unclouded assurance, that in this world they themselves will have become a memory. Such miseries are strewn broadcast in our homes. But Mrs Dalton's case was worse than most. She was not only sentenced to leave all she loved, and step into the unfathomed gulf of death alone, but to leave them in sore straits. Moreover, the little span of time during which her husband was still to remain with her was trenched upon by the necessity of his going to town, and making arrangements for the disposition of his property—or rather of what *had* been his before their ruin. He was bent upon being absent from Riverside as little as possible, but a 'monstrous cantle' of at least three days was thus cut out of the bare fortnight that still intervened before the sailing of the ship. Of course Edith might have accompanied him to London, but she shrank from expending the few pounds that this would cost upon her own pleasure or comfort. Every moment that could be passed in his company was now priceless to her, yet ten thousand of them were now foregone, for the sake of a few shillings. Such is poverty, which fools make light of, and liars praise for its wise teachings, and which rogues and scoundrels dare to flout at and despise.

Edith could, however, accompany her husband to the station without expense, since he was conveyed thither in one of the Riverside equipages; and this may be sure she did.

'I shall take a second-class ticket, my darling,' said he as they drew near their destination. His tone, if not that of a martyr, had something of serious self-sacrifice in it.

'Oh, *must* you?' returned she pleadingly. She

did not like the notion of 'Dear John' going by the second class; though for herself, if she could have gone with him, she would cheerfully have travelled in a cattle-truck.

'Yes; I think so. One can't begin to economise too early, as that woman said last night. The idea of her giving you such advice, at such a time!'

'It was very wise advice, John.'

'Very likely; but I wish it had choked her. However, I am going to follow it, you see. It is lucky I did not bring down Toffet with me' (Toffet was his valet), 'as we originally intended, or it would have been rather unpleasant: I mean, for him and me to travel together.'

'It would have been impossible, my dear.'

'Oh, I don't know; one soon gets used to these things. I daresay I shall have worse company than Toffet on board the *Flamborough Head*; for I am quite resolved to go in the steerage. It is a matter of twenty pounds—the difference is—and that twenty pounds will be of use to you at the Nook, you may depend upon it.'

'Don't talk of it, darling; not just now,' murmured Edith, with her head upon his breast: 'it has not come to parting yet. You will be back amongst us on Tuesday.'

'Yes, my pet, on Tuesday, at latest, if I can only get those lawyers to move out of their snail's pace. There is the auctioneer, too, to see about the lease. I have great hopes that the house will have improved in value since we took it. I think I shall take Skipton's bid for the horses, so that that matter can be arranged at once;' and he entered some memoranda in his note-book. How she envied him the many practical matters he had to deal with, the transaction of which must necessarily engross his thoughts. In the day of trouble, women's work is of little value to them as a distraction from care; the occupation of the hand, or even of the mind, affords but small relief; a certain sort of action is invaluable at such seasons. 'That pompous and pretentious arrangement for the transaction of affairs, called Business,' becomes then of real importance, and only men are able to avail themselves of it. This is fortunate, since they are certainly less able to endure 'worry' than the softer and sorer sex. Annoyances of any kind had always irritated John Dalton to an extent quite disproportionate to their importance; but, under the present circumstances, the least vexations galled him.

Though he asked for a second-class ticket at the station, the clerk—who knew him well—gave him a first from habit; and this had to be exchanged, to the wonder not only of the official, but of the various passengers in the waiting-room, to whom the Riverside liveries were familiar. Both eminent and wealthy persons are found sometimes to use the second class; but Mrs Campden would have felt it a slur upon the reputation of her house if any guest had arrived or departed from it in so ignoble a manner. And in this particular at least, Dalton would have satisfied her expectations; he had always been accustomed to the best of everything—never to the second best. He had never been in the pit of the opera, or put up with the accommodation of a coffee-room at an hotel. When he had journeyed, it was always in a luxurious manner, with piles of newspapers or heaps of railway books, which he had as often as not left in the carriage behind him, when they had served his

object of making the hours of travel move more quickly. But he was resolute now to adopt the most rigidly economical habits, and having omitted to bring a book with him from Riverside, was therefore compelled to feed on his own thoughts throughout the journey, or to enter against the grain into conversation with his fellow-travellers. They stared at him because a livery servant had opened the door of the carriage for him, and handed in his railway rug, but not more than the servant himself had stared when Dalton had said 'second-class, William.'

Perhaps nothing so brought home the fact to the Riverside household that 'them poor Daltons' were really ruined, as the tidings of this simple change of travelling carriage. 'Just think of Mr Dalton, 'in as has just been stannin' for Bampton, sitting cheek by jowl with Scarve, the Bleabarrow undertaker, and that 'ere 'prentice of his, Tompkins!' who happened to be going on a professional expedition by the same train. Tompkins, who was educating himself to be a mute, was just the sort of companion Dalton wanted, if he must needs have any; but Scarve was lugubriously loquacious. Under the influence of a flask of gin which he carried about with him, as he explained, as a precaution against infection, he grew very communicative about his 'jobs with the aristocracy,' of whom, if his word was to be credited, he had put a sufficient number under ground to make a House of Lords in the other world. 'I don't say but that there is firms in London as can bury as well or better than ourselves,' he whispered confidentially to Dalton; 'but in the country, Scarve & Co. yield to none.' When he got out, he pressed his card—it had a neat black border of about two inches broad, and a tomb in the centre, on which were inscribed his name and address—upon his fellow-traveller's attention; and though at first amused by it, it presently begat in his mind a ghastly reflection. Supposing, when he himself was far away, anything should happen to Edith, or any of the children, would a man like that—perhaps the very man himself—be sent for to the Nook to bury them? A morbid and monstrous thought, as he was well aware; but the knowledge of his own weakness availed him nothing. He beheld his little family, overshadowed by death as well as ruin, ministered to by hireling hands, forgotten and forsaken by friends, while he himself was thousands of miles away. It was the only time that he had dared to say to himself concerning any of his dear ones, 'They will die, perhaps, in my absence; their welcoming faces shall greet me never more.' As for himself, he felt too thickly clad in misery to be pervious to the shafts of Death; he could not lose *them* that way; but he felt that they might well leave *him*—Edith, who was so delicate, or Jenny, always an invalid—and then this man would come and see the last of them. It was an inexpressible relief to him when Mr Scarve and his assistant quitted the train, and with the most dejected faces climbed into a dog-cart, that was in waiting for them, driven by a groom in mourning.

To them succeeded an unmistakable commercial traveller; 'money and orders' were written in his twinkling eyes as legibly as the Hebrew characters that were wont to be seen (by the faithful) inscribed upon those of some pious folk of old. He was a chirpy gossip fellow, full of

Joe Millerish jokes, and very inquisitive. He was very curious to know 'who' Dalton 'travelled for,' as he expressed it.

'A family man, I presume?' said he. Dalton nodded in good-natured assent. 'Ah, then you are quite right to come second-class, sir; I always do it myself, and save the difference for Mrs R— (my name is Roberts) and the young people.' Presuming upon his superiority in years, he was so good as to give his companion much advice as to the pursuit of his supposed calling. 'My motto is *push*, sir'—which he pronounced like 'rush'—and I have always found that system to answer.' And by way of illustration, he dug the would-have-been member for Bampton playfully in the ribs.

Without being at all of the opinion of that modest philosopher who averred that he never spoke with any fellow-creature without learning something new, Dalton was by nature social and a citizen of the world; so that not only did Mr Roberts' conversation speed the leaden hours of the journey, but the two parted the best of friends.

'You are the right sort, *you* are,' was the eulogium passed upon him by that gentleman on the platform as they shook hands. In the midst of which leave-taking, up came Dalton's footman to shew him where the carriage stood.

'Well, I am blown,' said Mr Roberts, with a prolonged whistle.

He did not know, of course, that it was the last drive in his own carriage which his late fellow-traveller was ever to take.

BLIND FISHES.

AMONG the curiosities of Natural History are certain animals wholly blind, which, nevertheless, are able to find food and enjoy themselves by exercising an acute sense of hearing and feeling. Like a blind man who gropes his way along the street by means of a stick, as well as his keen sense of hearing, these animals apparently have no difficulty in finding their way, and also, what is more strange, catching for their prey animals possessed of sight. Here, we are called on to admire the wonderful adaptations of Nature. All living creatures have an organisation suitable to the position in which they are respectively placed, and adapted for finding their means of livelihood. Daylight, the gloom of twilight, total darkness—each has its appropriate animal life. Where there is no light, there is of course no need for eyes, and accordingly there are animals without eyes, adapted for living in those dark caverns into the recesses of which the sunlight never penetrates. Of animals destined to live in the dark, there are various genera and species, the more remarkable being certain insects and fishes.

Perhaps the most curious of all cave-animals are the blind fishes, which were first observed in that chief wonder of the American continent, the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky. This, the largest known cavern in the world, is in Edmonson county, and near Green River. It consists of a series of caverns, connected by long narrow galleries, which have

been explored to a distance of ten or twelve miles. These caverns, with their beautiful stalactite formations—from small pendicles to massive columns elaborately fluted and corniced, their delicate translucent curtains, elegant pendants, lofty pedestals, rosettes, wreaths, and other lovely stone-flowers, have been often described, since the Mammoth Cave was first discovered by the whites in 1801. A lively and altogether interesting description of it, under the title, *A Visit to the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky*, was published by the late John Wilson, the Scottish Vocalist, in 1849, the year of his sudden and early death. Speaking of a river which flows within the cavern, and has to be crossed in a boat, he says: 'Eche River is the great one we have to cross. . . . In this river are the eyeless fish. There are two kinds of them, neither having the least resemblance of a place for an eye, for, of course, they have no need of eyes.' He says farther on: 'As we were sailing up the river on our way home, Alfred, the guide, caught two of the eyeless fish. They are small, about a finger's length, one of them like a minnow, and the other something like a shrimp. There is not the slightest appearance of eyes about them.' John Wilson in these two sentences, the only allusions he makes to the blind fish, communicates almost all the information which had then been acquired.

The industry of American naturalists has in the meantime added considerably to the stock of knowledge regarding them. At a meeting of the Essex Institute, in Salem, Massachusetts, on November 25, 1874, living specimens of the two species of blind fishes which have been found in the cave were exhibited by Professor Putnam. Along with them he shewed a fish never before caught in the waters of the Mammoth Cave. This is the *Chologaster*, which Agassiz had described as he found it in the ditches of the rice-fields in South Carolina. It differs from the other two species in being provided with eyes. The specimen exhibited by Professor Putnam was nearly five inches in length, of a delicate brownish tint, and shewed dark and well-developed eyes. Five specimens had been secured by the net, but with great difficulty, so shy and quick of movement is this singular inhabitant of the dark waters of the cave. The habits of the *Chologaster* are in marked contrast to those of the blind fishes. It lives at the bottom of the stream, darting with the utmost rapidity, and swimming rapidly by very quick lateral motions of its whole body. It seldom comes near the surface, unless when disturbed. The blind fishes, on the contrary, swim slowly about, or remain at rest, near the surface. By the aid of torch-light they are readily seen, and are captured by a careful and quick movement of the scoop-net. The movement has to be very careful; for if, by means of peculiar organs of feeling with which they are liberally supplied, they feel the least disturbance in the water, they move off with a quick dart, and again swim slowly about. Occasionally, but not often, they drop to the bottom for a short time. Dr. Tellekamp says: 'It is found solitary, and is very difficult to be caught, since it requires the greatest caution to bring the net beneath them without

driving them away. At the slightest motion of the water they dart off a certain distance, and immediately stop. Then is the time to follow them rapidly with a net, and bring them as quickly out of the water.' Professor Cope says: 'If these Amblyopses be not alarmed, they come to the surface to feed, and swim in full sight like aquatic ghosts. When on the surface, they are easily taken by the hand or net, if perfect silence be preserved, for they are unconscious of the presence of an enemy, except by the sense of hearing. This sense is, however, very acute, for at any noise they turn suddenly downwards, and hide beneath stones, &c. at the bottom. They must take much of their food near the surface, as the life of the depths is very sparse. This habit is rendered easy by the structure of the fish, for the mouth is directed upwards, and the head is very flat above, thus allowing the mouth to be at the surface.'

The fact that these blind fishes succeed in catching for their prey the *Chologaster*, which as we have already mentioned is endowed with sight and very rapid in its movements, shews how well developed the sense of touch is. The blind fish must be very active in the pursuit. It is probably guided by the movements made by its prey, the water so sensibly influencing its delicate organs of feeling as to enable it to follow rapidly; while the fish pursued, not having the sense of touch so fully developed, is constantly encountering obstacles in the dark. The blind fish brings forth its young alive. This fact was proved by the statement made by Mr. Thomson before the Belfast (America) Natural History Society, to the effect that one of them from the cave, four and a half inches long, was put in water as soon as it was captured, and gave birth there to nearly twenty young ones, which swam about for some time, but soon died. These, with the exception of one or two, were preserved, and were each four lines in length. As to the size to which they grow, Professor Putnam tells us that the longest specimens of the *Amblyopsis* he has seen were from four to four and a half inches. Dr. Günther mentions in his *Catalogue of Fishes* a specimen in the British Museum which measures five inches. The largest which has been reported as taken of late years is said to have been captured during the summer of 1871, and sold for ten dollars to a person who had the precious morsel cooked for his supper. The smallest specimen Putnam had seen when he gave his lecture at the Essex Institute measured one and nine-tenths of an inch in length.

It is still a matter of doubt whether these blind fishes are from a species radically destitute of eyes, or have lost their eyes by disuse. The probability is that they are descendants of fishes with eyes, and by living a long course of years in darkness, their eyes have disappeared; in other words, that they are the victims of circumstances. What fortifies this latter view of the matter is, that these blind fishes possess marks indicative of eyes when in a former condition. It is said that these abortive eyes can be detected as black spots under the skin. Owen describes the eye as 'a minute tegumentary follicle, coated by a dark pigment, which receives the end of a special cerebral nerve.' Putnam says: 'Whatever view be taken with regard to the development of the eye in the blind fish, the anatomical characters which have been discovered and enumerated, shew that though

quite imperfect as we see them in the adult, it is constructed after the type of the eyes of the vertebrates.' It certainly is not adapted to the formation of images, since the common integument and the areolar tissue between it and the surface would prevent the transmission of light to it, except in a diffused condition. No pupil, nor anything analogous to an iris, was detected, unless we regard as representing the latter the increased number of pigment cells at the anterior part of the lobe.

The Chologaster has been called the mud-fish, and from the statement that it is of a dark colour, taken along with a drawing of the animal, we learn that the position of the dorsal fin is the same as that of the fish commonly called the mud-fish in the fresh-waters of the Middle, Western, and Southern states—a circumstance which indicates, perhaps, that it belongs to the genus *Melanura*. The mud-fish is so called from a habit it has of burying itself in the mud to the depth of from two to four inches, and remaining so buried during a time of drought. This habit may have tended to fit it for a subterranean life. Its colour has been remarked on by several American naturalists in relation to the theory of the adaptability of the colour of an animal to its surroundings. It is so nearly the exact colour of the dark sand at the bottom of the river in the Mammoth Cave, that it is difficult to distinguish the fish when it lies at rest. This, however, can hardly be said to add to its security, for, as utter darkness prevails, the fish would be equally safe from its enemy, if it displayed on its body all the colours of the rainbow. Besides, its principal enemy is the blind fish. If the chief reason for the adaptation of colour to surroundings is protection against attack, it might be remarked that the Chologaster may have had enemies, now extinct, against whom its colour was a safeguard, or it may have other enemies besides the blind fish, of which we know nothing.

The great speculation regarding these denizens of the cave has been, how did they get there at all? Professor Putnam, a remarkably cautious reasoner, suggests that the sea at one time extended over the limestone region in which the great cave is situated. He says: 'Some forms of life are found in these subterranean streams which at present seem to indicate a marine origin; and brackish-water animals of certain characters, once inclosed in the cave, would be very likely to survive under the peculiar conditions in which they were placed, as we know to have been the case under other somewhat similar circumstances. That many, or, with two or three exceptions, nearly all the thirty or forty species of vertebrates, articulates, molluscs, and still lower forms, including a few plants, now discovered in the caves of Kentucky, are of comparatively late introduction, is probable from the fact that they are so closely allied to forms living in the vicinity of the caves; but that the blind fishes, the Chologaster, and a few of the lower class of articulates, as the Lernean parasite on the blind fish, may have been inhabitants of the subterranean stream for a much longer time, is worthy of consideration on the following grounds. Firstly, the blind-fish family has no immediate allies existing in the interior waters; only another species of the family, in addition to those found in the Mammoth Cave, being known, and at present existing in

the rice-ditches of South Carolina. Secondly, the Lernean parasite is much more common on marine fishes than on strictly river species; and is more decidedly a marine than a fresh-water form. These facts may be taken as at least indicating the probability of the early origin of some part of the great cave system of the Ohio valley; and while there may be nothing in the present structure of the caves to indicate their having been formed in part while in contact with salt-water, the erosion of the limestone, and the modification of the early chambers by later action, should be carefully thought out before it can be denied that the caves were not, in some slight part, for a time supplied with marine life.' Professor Putnam goes on to assert, with what seems good reason on his side, that until a specimen of the Chologaster, or some other member of the family, has been obtained in the external waters of the Ohio valley, we cannot regard the family to which the blind fishes belong, as having been originally distributed in that valley, and afterwards becoming exterminated in the rivers, and only existing in two such widely different localities as the coast of South Carolina, and the subterranean streams of the South-western States. Marine forms of life are found in fresh-water rivers. There was exhibited at that meeting of the Essex Institute a specimen of a shrimp which had been taken in the Green River near one of the outlets of the Mammoth Cave. In Florida, fishes, once marine, are now confined to fresh-water lakes of comparatively recent formation. The announcement of the Gobiosoma having been found in the Ohio River, is another instance of a marine fish living in fresh waters.

Blind fishes are supposed to exist in all subterranean rivers that flow through the great limestone region underlying the carboniferous rocks in the central portions of the United States. Professor Cope obtained specimens from the Wyandotte Cave, Kansas, and from wells in the vicinity. In the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Cambridge (America), there is a specimen which agrees with those animals found on the northern side of the Ohio, as well as on its southern side, in the rivers of the Mammoth Cave. In a cave situated several miles down the Green River from the Mammoth Cave, and on the opposite bank, a number of specimens of the Typhlichthys and several blind crayfish have been collected. In this cave, called Blind-Fish Cave, blind crayfishes have been found not far from its entrance; and at times they have been taken quite out in the daylight, while yet they are identical in every way with those of the Mammoth and other caves where utter darkness prevails. Nay, further, Poey, the distinguished Cuban naturalist, has given an account of blind fishes found in Cuba, in wells and caves, at a depth of between twenty and thirty metres below ground. They are well known to the negroes, who eat them. In fact, all the recent indications shew that there is a very great deal still to be learnt about blind fishes and cave-life generally. Zealous exploration of the caves, and minute and exact records of the discoveries made in them, are profitable occupations to observant naturalists. The caves of the West Indian Islands, those of Brazil, of the East Indies, and of Africa, are wide openings to vast stores of curious knowledge. As to the Mammoth Cave, Professor Putnam suggests that, for fresh and thoroughly extensive explorations,

a Commission should be appointed, acting under the American government or state authority, in order that the most ample facilities may be afforded by the parties who own it.

AN ELECTION STORY.

IN TWO CHAPTERS.—CHAP. I.

WHEN it was announced, by numberless posters and smaller bills, to the worthy electors of the ancient borough of Westdown, that Sir Harry Waring, Bart., had consented to become their candidate in the forthcoming election, every political wiseacre of the locality declared his return was 'as good as certain.' For he was an unexceptionable candidate, and had—so every one asserted—made up his mind to leave no stone unturned to obtain his seat; and if he had not quite determined to die in the attempt, at least he was quite resolved to 'bleed' freely during the campaign; then he was of good presence, tall, handsome, and well-made, with a clear mellow voice, just fitted to enunciate new arguments or set off old ones to the best advantage. There was nothing utopian or immovable about his programme; his views were firm, but modifiable; his political opinions were so uncompromising, that it took an energetic deputation to alter them; in short, he knew as well how to balance himself between two stools, as any 'Liberal Conservative' or 'Moderate Liberal' in the present House of Commons. Every charity in Westdown would gain by the possession of such a member, should he be returned; and last, but not least, Sir Harry had a handsome wife; a lady whose family was known by the electors to be 'very high,' she being the second daughter of the late Earl Affington of Kingsdene; and when an earl's daughter with undeniable beauty sets to work to charm the suffrages out of electors, the chances are that her husband will head the poll, unless, indeed, the wife of the opposing candidate be still handsomer—and the daughter of a marquis.

Lady Waring was above the middle height; her form was perfect, and she resembled in feature the great Mrs Siddons—not as that lady appeared in a tragic part, but as she might have looked in genteel comedy—her nose and mouth being finely chiselled, and her eyes large, lustrous, and brown. Her manner was charming in its stately grace; not that she was simply a beautiful statue; on the contrary, there was as much fire, force, and tenderness in her face as would serve for five or six ordinary ladies of this impassive nineteenth century. Sir Harry was a fine man, standing some six feet in his boots; he had a clear, healthy complexion, keen gray eyes, and an 'aristocratic' nose; his face was almost whiskerless, and he resembled one of the bland heroes of mild romance, as depicted in old engravings, except that his figure was not rendered preternaturally slender by the wearing of stays, and that his brown curly hair was not powdered.

Sir Harry and Lady Waring had been married one year at the time my story opens, and the election campaign had commenced. As both were handsome, those who agree with the proverb, 'Like clings to like,' will not be surprised to hear that theirs was a 'love-match' on both sides; but it is probable that the Affington family, and the select few who were privileged to call themselves its friends, were never more astonished than

when the engagement was made public; for Agnes had long been destined by her mother and other near relatives, to marry a very ancient millionaire, the Marquis of Cawt; and that peer had paid her all the attention supposed to be necessary from a titled Cæsar to win a young lady's hand in these unchivalric days. And it is probable that Lady Agnes would have become Marchioness of Cawt, had she not met Sir Harry at a county ball, where something very like love at first sight was experienced by both the young people. Still, the impression might have worn off, had not Sir Harry gone on a visit to Hartmoor (the estate lying next to Kingsdene); for there, between pleasant strolls in mossy lanes, and croquet-parties on the shady lawn near the old gray weather-beaten house, and boating on the lake, and idling about the grounds, Sir Harry was fairly enslaved, and placed his hand and fortune at her disposal. To Lady Affington's unfeigned vexation, Agnes did not refuse them, but openly 'declared her love' and her resolution to have her own way—and the baronet.

It was so astounding to her mother, that Agnes, who had always been rather ambitious, and who was so well calculated to shine in society, should prefer a mere baronet to such an unexceptionable *parti* as Lord Cawt. And Lady Affington's disappointment is not to be wondered at, for Agnes was the first daughter of the house for many generations who had married for anything but a good establishment, or evinced any but the calmest and coolest attachment towards her husband. But Agnes was a degenerate Affington, possessing a warm heart and a very strong will; and she could not be content, as so many of her ancestors had been, with a mere lukewarm attachment; and so she was fully determined, in spite of all opposition, to marry the man she loved, or no other. Thus in due time Sir Harry and she were married, amid the half-hearted congratulations of her kindred and friends; and during the time they spent in Scotland, and afterwards at Waring Park, they were supremely happy.

Sir Harry knew that his wife was considered to have 'a will,' nay, even 'a temper' (indeed, if she had not possessed the former, it is probable she would never have become Lady Waring, from the objections already stated to the marriage); for even in the most polite and well-bred family, where peculiarities are ignored, it is impossible that any one in daily contact with its members should remain totally unaware of any specialities of disposition that exist. But then the Baronet knew that he too had 'a will,' and perhaps a 'temper' also; and as he always would be kind but firm—very firm towards her, and as he knew that he was beloved, it is not surprising that he felt satisfied she would never be self-willed or obstinate with him.

For some months all went smoothly. If Agnes Affington had been at times hasty and exacting, Agnes Waring was more deferential and anxious to please than any ordinary meek woman ever was, and fulfilled all her wifely duties in an admirable manner. Unfortunately, however, love which can work wonders, cannot prevent two people bound to each other for life, who possess only a conventional amount of self-control, from being anything but comfortable in the end. Before long, Agnes Waring took umbrage at trifles just as readily as Agnes Affington had done; and Sir

Harry was as impatient and easily provoked as he had been before he was subdued for a time by his wife's surpassing beauty. Then Lady Waring would subside into silent hauteur, and Sir Harry was tempted to try the serenity of her contempt, and in some instances succeeded; and then passionate scenes ensued between them, which would have surprised those who were aware that they had been once deeply attached to one another.

It must not, however, be supposed that Sir Harry and Lady Waring invariably disagreed, for they had many pleasant oases amidst the dreary desert of ill-temper; only, as time went on, these were less often met with, while the sand-storms were more frequent.

The day Sir Harry and his wife arrived at Westdown was one of these oases; the former had neither frowned nor sneered, and the latter had looked and talked her very best—which was no mean best. They had been greeted with uproarious enthusiasm by the crowd; a small brass band had brayed patriotic airs, and later, several tradesmen had exhibited designs in gas in their honour, and it had been a triumphant *entrée* indeed.

As the colour that denotes that the wearer is Liberal or Conservative in one county or borough, is sometimes worn by the opposite party in another, it may be mentioned, without at the same time divulging Sir Harry's political principles, that the 'Waring colour' was yellow.

The amount of labour he and Lady Waring got through in the next fortnight it is almost impossible to describe. He did his duty manfully; bawled platitudes at ward meetings as long as his voice would last; made vigorous attempts to conciliate every class of voter by an active personal canvass, and enunciated misty arguments, enlivened by aged 'Joe Millers,' at the large public meetings. Lady Waring also played her part well, receiving provincial magnates—so given to prosing—graciously, shaking hands with some scores of her husband's supporters; and there is little doubt that her grace and beauty gained for Sir Harry more votes than his eloquence could ever have done.

The opposing candidate was the Honourable George Wynne, a middle-aged, ordinary-looking man, much given to the recounting of unintelligible statistics. Such a man would not have been a very formidable antagonist to the handsome young baronet, had he not been aided by the charming young wife he had recently married, and who had come to Westdown to assist him to the utmost of her powers. Every day, the 'winning Mrs Wynne,' as the 'blue' newspaper of the town called her—her husband belonging to that party—and her beautiful rival drove through the quaint streets of Westdown. Lady Waring, attired in a faultlessly fitting buff costume, and wearing some bewitching hat or bonnet which shewed her beauty to even greater advantage, guided her spirited bay ponies with a firm accustomed hand, and bowed right and left with almost imperial grace; and Mrs Wynne, too young and heedless to manage her pretty gray ponies, was driven by a smart page. She was very young, with an innocent, unsophisticated look in her fresh, smiling face; soft, brown-gray eyes, and golden hair, that escaped from its fashionable trammels, and floated in airy locks around her forehead, and mingled with the dark-blue ribbons that she wore; and sometimes, when a muddy politician

hissed or hooted as she passed, her face would cloud for a moment, as it might have done not long before at some unmerited rebuke in the schoolroom. But her youth and her pretty sensitive face usually silenced the adverse rabble. Lady Waring, on the contrary, if she were received with an outburst of enthusiastic cheering, or in silence, or with 'marks of disapprobation,' was uniformly calm and impassive, always ready to bow with incomparable grace and *sang-froid* when the occasion demanded, but not otherwise; whilst ardent little Mrs Wynne scattered smiles broadcast among the crowd, and shewed by every gesture how she longed for her husband to be victorious. Westdown could at first hardly decide which beauty it preferred, but ultimately, though many admired the 'English' loveliness of Mrs Wynne, the majority of the people found Lady Waring's fine features and graceful dignity most to be admired—it was so aristocratic.

Sir Harry was decidedly the popular candidate. His meetings were large and encouraging; while Mr Wynne had been silenced in one ward and pelted in another. Altogether, there was every prospect that the former would be victorious. Still his success was by no means certain. There were a number of 'doubtful' voters who might yet turn the scale in Mr Wynne's favour; and knowing this, Sir Harry was nervously anxious to gain votes, and irritable and dissatisfied when he imagined that from some cause or other, one had been lost to him.

Two days before the election, the canvassing being over, a large final meeting of Sir Harry's supporters was to be held at the town-hall, at which Lady Waring and a great number of ladies with buff sympathies were to be present as usual. All had gone tolerably well between Sir Harry and his wife until the night before, when he had declared that she had not been sufficiently affable to some of the more apathetic members of the party at a private meeting held at the hotel; and reproached her with having lost him much 'interest,' if not several votes, in consequence. It must be owned that this was unjust, for Lady Waring had been working hard for a fortnight, doing all in her power to insure his return; and during the whole time he had never once thanked her, or paid her the simplest compliment; and whilst others were so ready to utter pleasant little flatteries on her appearance and her aptitude for election warfare, he treated both as mere matters of course, quite undeserving of notice or comment. She had answered his reproaches at first coldly and contemptuously, not deigning to defend herself, or appease his rising irritation with any wifely hypocrisies; but when he had replied harshly, her passion had risen, and after uttering many bitter truths and exaggerations, she had retired for the night in a very unenviable state of mind, leaving Sir Harry in a towering rage to brood over her words at his leisure.

They saw but little of each other during the forenoon of the day of the meeting, Sir Harry being busied with his agent and committee, and Lady Waring driving out as usual. At luncheon, except for an occasional monosyllable, silence reigned between them, shewing that the quarrel of the previous evening was forgotten by neither. In the afternoon, Sir Harry returned thoroughly fagged, to rest before dining, so as to be the better

able to deliver his final speech in the evening. Lady Waring was in the room when he entered, and was still chafing at the bitter words, not only of the night before but of many former occasions, which now rankled in her mind. Everything, however, might have subsided quietly for the time, had not one of the committee entered the room to convey some unimportant election intelligence in an important manner. After a short, genial chat with Sir Harry, he tried to gain Lady Waring's attention by addressing to her a few vapid remarks; but he was speedily reduced to silence by the hauteur of her look and tone, and soon took an awkward leave of Sir Harry, who sought to cover the chilliness of his wife's farewell recognition, by warmly shaking him by the hand as he left the room. Sir Harry was greatly provoked at her manner—assumed, he said, to annoy him—and he determined to alter the state of things once for all.

'Agnes,' he said, 'your manner to that man was simply intolerable—one of our foremost men too. You shew very plainly that—you care nothing for my success—nothing for *me*—but that, I am aware, has been the case for some time. Any other wife would at least have the decency to hide her indifference when she knew that most important results were to be gained for her husband by—at least a show of amiability. One would think that, knowing the *prestige* of the thing, and how one's social position is enhanced by it, you—you would help to insure my success for your own sake, if for nothing else. But no! it pleases you to be haughty and disdainful; and you are supercilious enough to—in fact, to lose me every vote in the place.'

"The prestige of the thing"—"the social position," repeated Lady Waring, with cold scorn in her tone. 'In the numerous effusions of yours that I have seen since I came to this place, I believe you have given another reason for your anxiety to enter parliament. Let me see—I think it was "necessary to the well-being of the working man," the "advancement of trade," and "the welfare of our glorious constitution." And Lady Waring quoted various other stock phrases from her husband's speeches, delivering them with a disdainful emphasis intensely galling to him.

There can be nothing more irritating to a man when he has been persuading himself for some weeks that his motives are pure and disinterested, than for a friend or relative to lay bare the hidden causes from which his actions spring, and shew him how flimsy and worthless are his high-flown sentiments. But when his *wife*, who should be blind to his failings, taunts him with his evasions and inconsistencies—as Lady Waring did in this instance with unsparing tongue—the probabilities are that he will have for her, as Sir Harry began to have for his wife, something almost amounting to fervent hatred.

He was so thoroughly enraged, that when she ceased speaking it was some moments before he could answer; but at last he said: 'At anyrate, Agnes, if you have lost all sense of your duty as a wife, and—and care for nothing but satisfying your own caprices, I—I am determined you shall do what I wish, nevertheless. You shall do all in your power to please and conciliate the people. You delight in setting my wishes at naught; but you must learn that I am to be obeyed—I

am your husband, remember, and I—I will be your master!'

Lady Waring rose and looked at him with heightened colour and a defiant gleam in her lustrous brown eyes.

'It was a pity,' she said slowly, 'as you evidently wanted a slave for a wife, that you did not marry some pretty nonentity of a school-girl, who would have obeyed her "master's" commands without question, and received all his arrogance and ingratitude with meek thankfulness. Such a rôle does not suit *me*.'

'It was a pity,' he answered savagely, with a sullen look; 'but as it cannot be remedied, I must put up with it, however much I regret it. And you will have to accustom yourself to the rôle, for you—you *shall* obey me, though you hate me in your heart. You have thwarted me for a long time. But I will put a stop to it once for all. You shall find that when you lost your amiability, you—you lost your power. My will shall govern yours for the future. Now, you will go to-night, and—'

'I will *not* go!' she cried, turning from him, and stepping towards the door. 'You cannot force me. Only fancy the suave, courteous Sir Harry laying hands on his wife! I did what I could to further your cause, and you tell me I have done worse than nothing. Very well! I will serve you no more. And you repent marrying me. I can leave you—at once, if you choose; it matters nothing to me. But I stir not one step to the meeting to-night;' and she opened the door and would have left him, but that he strode towards her white with passion, and held her back.

'You shall!' he said in a hoarse voice, too overpowered by rage to speak distinctly. His face was disfigured by passion as he looked at her, as she fronted him steadily and defiantly.

'If I could do anything to make you lose this election, I would!' she uttered. 'I will not be forced to stay here—let me go!' and she attempted to free herself from his grasp; but he, mindful in the midst of all, of passers-by, attempted to drag her back into the room, and seized her with such force that his furious hold bruised her shapely white arm.

'Coward!' she cried, and her bitter contempt was not good to see at that moment—'coward! I will not go; you cannot—you *dare* not force me!'

PHYSIOGNOMY OF HOUSES.

ANYBODY who has travelled outside the limits of his own shire knows how houses in different parts of the country shew distinct recognisable types. If a house out of the south-eastern counties could be dropped anywhere in my region, I believe I should be able to detect its provinciality. In some manufacturing districts, the dwellings are of a tall, slim, consumptive build, suggesting that they are run up too quickly, suffering for it ever afterwards; in some other neighbourhoods, they are sturdy, broad-set, looking robustly at you, evidently twice as able to face the world. In one county, houses stand in the hard, chill grayness of stone, with shallow windows, which, in the daytime, never shew more than three inches of white blind; elsewhere, they jollily glow in all the colours of brick, setting off their shining casements with profusion

of lace and muslin. Some districts habitually wear their roofs pitched half as high again as others; and the roofs themselves may either redden in tiles, or gleam bluely in slates, or modestly hide in sober thatch.

It is the houses more than the people that give the general aspect to a locality. The buildings are the 'larger inhabitants,' and they impress you more. I know a district in the north of England where the houses are wretched-looking, deformed, repulsive; they might be blind, lame, maimed, diseased buildings mustered from all other parts. Travellers by railway, seeing the place for the first time, I believe do not feel quite at ease till they are several stations away. On the other hand, there is a certain region in the west of England where every dwelling has so meek an air, that you seem to be on terms of acquaintance with anybody you happen to see standing at a door. But these general typical distinctions are not of the highest importance; the serious point is, that, wherever you may live, you are on good terms with some of the houses you have to face daily, while with others you are on ill terms. Certain dwellings you like at first sight, others you never get a friendly feeling for, if they do their very best to gain your good opinion, laboriously preserving an unblemished character year after year. It is of little use attempting to explain the mystery. If you watch a house building, you never quite know how it will turn out in this respect till the very last minute. So long as the scaffold-poles are all up, the premises have no more character than a human hobbledehoy. But once let the roof be closed in, the last brick be put upon the chimney, and the building fairly open its eyes—that is, shew its windows glazed—and it becomes an individuality straightway.

I should be sorry to say that there are not houses which, by trying very hard, will in course of time, if you are obliged to see much of them, force you to abate a little of your first ill opinion of them. I have seen a few houses successfully reform. They have put up clean blinds, repainted their woodwork and ironwork, and have made their decency obtrusive even. But it is very difficult; to succeed they find nearly as hard a task as do human beings in the same circumstances. There is great unfairness. In different places, I know several handsome, reckless, ill-principled houses which have repeatedly had deaths from fever in them; occasionally they break people's limbs by throwing them down steps and stairs; children have been drowned in wells upon the premises; they regularly give old people the rheumatics. Yet folks cannot shake off a sneaking liking for them. There are other decent, hard-striving, careful, quiet premises, which, if they so much as lose an infant in teething or by measles, have everybody in a hubbub against them instantly. It is said to be all the fault of the houses.

Some houses I only know in a collective kind of way; a row of them together, or a square, a cres-

cent, a terrace: just as you only know some people in the rack, so to speak, as being members of the same family, or belonging to the same 'set,' no one of them affecting you particularly. I am acquainted with a row which has an especially well-to-do kind of air. The houses put forward such rotund bay-windows, keep the front railings, the doors and windows, in such unnecessary freshness of paint, shew glimpses of such a wealth of children, have such an army of servants, and now and then get up such a brisk bustle of carriages, that it is nearly like a small sum of found money in your pocket to walk past and have a good look at them. They are among houses what aldermen are among men—completely prosperous. I would not miss that row of dwellings for a trifle: if they were pulled down, the town would feel a gloom; a great many persons in the habit of passing the locality would be made worse-tempered without knowing why. In every small town, and in certain quarters of the larger ones, there is just such a row, or quadrant, or square, which gives a special character to all around. Sometimes, it is true, a 'big house' coming into a neighbourhood will morally ruin it; what was before a modest district, will begin to put on airs, and grow conceited.

But houses may be known in the collective way for ill as well as for good. I know a square of as ill-conditioned, cantankerous mansions as can be found anywhere. They set their curtains at one another; they try to push their dirt each in front of the next; if one house slams its door, another instantly bangs its door; they flaunt faded green mignonette boxes from the first-floor window-sills under one another's noses; they try to puff smoke at each other from their chimneys. First one house, then another, sets the people in it to quarrel with those in the next; occasionally others join in, until there is a general uproar. I pity the inhabitants. Evidently, they are made tools of by the premises; the blotch-fronted house at the first corner, and the second one opposite, with a piece broken out of the upper window-sill, being, as I suspect, mainly at the bottom of it all. Even this is not the worst case. In another part of the town is a short street of houses so deformed, so slouching, so desperate-looking, that I would go a mile round to avoid a glimpse of them. They seem ready for anything that is bad; as if, when dark comes, they might shift their ground, and go in search of villainy, if it did not come to them. I do not know that it would much surprise me to come upon them at midnight slinking along on their way to some other foul, bad quarter of the town. But when daylight comes, they are always back in their place. Ugh!

I gladly turn to where, in a by-corner of a nice quiet thoroughfare, stands a house which is the drollest, most diverting, squat, two-storied, five-windowed, low-doorwayed, comical brick-and-mortar creature anybody ever had the luck to discover. Its temper is very uncertain. Sometimes it takes not the slightest notice of you. You may pass it, you may repass it, and there is not a sign that it sees you; you cannot detect a twinkle in the corner of a single pane; not a shadow stirs from eaves to basement. Go by it the very next day, and so soon as it gets its first wink of you, while you yet are yards away, it flashes into mirth in every window; a quiver of broad grimaces runs

up from one story to the other, till it seems to give the very roof a side-cock, slightly nodding towards you. Not far from this queer little dwelling are two tall, stately houses, so utterly respectable, so perfectly genteel, that I feel a sense of restraint in alluding to them here. You are certain that neither of them has done the slightest improper thing in its life. You go and try to catch them unawares; it is of no use. They never unbend, even to the extent of wearing a blind the least bit crooked. You instinctively straighten your back as you approach them, carrying your stick or umbrella properly, and walk past at your very best, feeling that they are critical. But even these are better than another house I know elsewhere, which frowns at you with its eaves, threatens you with its pot-laden chimneys; every window scowls at you from the corner of pitch-black panes, no matter how brightly the sun is shining. You feel sure that it keeps a bad-tempered dog at the back, to bite you if you ventured within its territories.

To describe in detail all sorts of houses would be impossible. Some of them would have to be spoken of as uncertain in temperament. There are weak-minded houses as well as men; you do not know what they will be like on your next seeing them. One time, they look steady and respectable; at the next inspection, they have quite gone to the bad, are suddenly and mysteriously grown reckless, wretched. They have given up cleaning their doorsteps; they no longer take any pride in their knobs or knockers; perhaps, they wrinkle and soil their blinds; it may be, they grime their panes with dust. A number of houses which, I believe, are really decent and well-behaved, having nothing in particular upon their consciences, suffer much in appearance, simply from an odd nervousness of manner they have. They huddle away their outbuildings, just as if they had stolen them, and were afraid of their being recognised if they were seen. Then, some old houses can commit startling acts of folly. A house that was for years a great favourite with me, suddenly turned its back upon its long-earned reputation in a most shameful way. It used to be a quiet, sedate dwelling, with only elderly people to be seen in and about it; you would have felt sure that the cry of a new-come baby in any room within it would have made it start till it shivered its very tiles off. But passing it one day after a long interval, I was shocked; it had a whole family of young children sprawling about the doorstep, every one of them plainly enough its own.

I have met with a worse case even than this. A small dwelling which year after year was perfectly inoffensive, if not in any way gratifying, all at once stuccoed its front, thrust out two inflated bay-windows, stuck on at the gable a pretentious conservatory, with a stupendous gilt weather-cock upon the roof, and put up a pair of green side-gates half as big as itself—a cooped-up, tawdry-pinnacled coach-house looking at you over them. It now insults every other house within sight in the street. Its last freak has been to perch a great white cockatoo in front, to scream all day long. In fact, its self-conceit is making it an offence to all the neighbourhood.

But I will not quit the subject in this unthankful way. Let me speak of a villa I know in one of the suburbs; the daintiest nest of elegant com-

fort and sweet health imaginable. A cluster of tall shapely elm-trees at its back scatter shadows, now lightly, now thickly, upon its peaked roofs. Its garden and grounds, with their close-shaven lawns and clean-gravelled paths, are of just the right dimensions; matching exactly the broad sunny southern gable, the honeysucked porch, the mullioned rose-trained windows. White-roofed greenhouses and a picturesque grotto partially shew among the laurels, the hollies, the dwarf firs. In the right months, beds of rhododendrons heap their blossoms on each side of the short curving drive; or geraniums burn in different hues nearer to the ground, with lines and patterns of other flowers here and there. Always a ripple from a tiny brook is tinkling faintly somewhere within the bounds, half-betraying its secret windings towards a small triangle of white shining pond, lying a little to the left in front. This house keeps a baby to roll laughing and prattling at times about the centre grass-plot; it also has a silver-haired grandmother to sit, book in hand, occasionally on a seat under a drooping beech close by. In fact it spares nothing; it is perfect. Every one who passes is put into good-humour by this dwelling; I myself make little private pilgrimages, just to be gladdened by the sight of it.

I have referred chiefly to the outsides of houses; nearly similar remarks might be made as to their interiors. Some houses are sad deceivers. Seen from the outside they are bright and gay, but the moment you pass the threshold their hypocrisy is detected. The rooms chill you, the passages blind you. I know a house with a whole family of unmarried daughters—unmarried they will remain so long as their parents mistakenly live in it. There is not a snug bit of shelter in which a sheep-faced young fellow might safely make love, in the whole premises. The rooms are somehow all connected, doors opening in and out everywhere; and in the least-used apartment, where wooing would have mainly to take place, a staring mirror over the mantel is so whitely, so blankly lighted up by a queer corner window, that any decent young man thinking of a proposal would be put out of countenance by it instantly.

Rooms differ very much in the feelings they give. I have been in two or three so hard and stern, that only give me my back to the window, and I think in them I could calmly receive my creditors, and explain to them that I could not pay. In other soft languishing rooms, the first word of such a statement would crush you. I know apartments where nobody can be good-tempered, no matter how hard he may try; turn combative men in, and they straightway begin to argue; introduce some women, and, under the sheer influence of the place, they start the talk with scandal. There are other rooms in which nobody can be long without beginning to joke; some people are witty there, and nowhere else. And I know at least one room so well lighted, so frank, so clear, so mildly stern, that in it, it would be impossible to refuse a reasonably asked favour, even *before* dinner.

But in fairness it ought to be said that some of the houses we have been blaming might urge something for themselves. Numbers of them might say that they have never had a fair chance either to gain or to keep a reputation. They have had too

big a family fastened upon their backs from the very start, or else they have never had a clean tidy tenant put into them. Some houses are much to be pitied.

OUR FEATHERED NEIGHBOURS.

THE CUCKOO.

Most people are pleased when they hear the note of the Cuckoo for the first time in the season of spring. We welcome it as the harbinger of fair weather, green fields, flowery hedgerows, and verdant woods.

Notwithstanding the familiarity with which the cuckoo's dulcet notes are recognised, seeing that it prevails throughout our own islands and the continent of Europe, few persons, comparatively speaking, are acquainted with the habits of this annual visitor to our land. Visitor only during the early summer months it is now generally considered to be, although formerly it was gravely contended, that, instead of migrating, it hibernated within our coasts, secreting itself in stacks, or under litter in barns. There may have been instances of this, but they are exceptional. The cuckoo is a migratory bird, and returns to its accustomed haunts with unerring regularity. The old adage says:

Let the sun be never so strong,

The cuckoo won't come till March has gone.

It should be borne in mind that in matters pertaining to folk-lore the 'old style' is generally referred to; so that, according to our ancestors' reckoning, the bird may be expected by us about the 12th of April, which is tolerably near the mark. In northern districts of Great Britain it makes its appearance generally about the end of April or beginning of May. The pleasant note of the cuckoo resounding through the groves has suggested many poetical effusions. Apparently without knowledge of its character, poets make it the theme of compliment and admiration. Alluding to its note, and annual migration of the cuckoo to a warmer climate, Michael Bruce observes in his charming ode—

Thou hast no sorrow in thy song,
No winter in thy year.

He might have extended the compliment to the effect that no bird is so fortunate in getting rid of the trouble of bringing up its young.

Like some dastardly parents who leave the rearing of their children to others, the cuckoo has the impudence to leave other birds to sit on its eggs and bring the young to maturity. It is a clever device, and the wonder is how the poor foster-parents can be cheated into this act of hospitality. The thing is managed very adroitly. The female cuckoo lays her egg on the ground; then taking it in her beak, she watches an opportunity to pop it into the nest of some small bird, such as a hedge-sparrow, robin, wren, or titlark; these unsuspecting little animals having no more notion of the trick that has been performed than a hen has when it sits assiduously hatching the eggs of a duck. The rascality of the parent cuckoo is matched by the young intruder. As soon as it is able to look around, it begins to contrive ways and means of ejecting from the nest the young of its foster-mother, in order that it may enjoy all

the food that is brought to the nest. In succession, one after the other, it ejects the whole brood, which tumbling down outside, are left to perish. Occasionally, two young cuckoos have been discovered in the same nest, but in that case they have no more pity on each other than on the legitimate occupants. A battle takes place as soon as the latter are all disposed of, and, of course, the weaker of the two will eventually share the fate of the others. The cuckoo never lays two eggs in the same nest; when more than one egg is found, a second cuckoo has visited that nest. In 1853 Dr Baldamus of Stuttgart published a series of interesting observations on the egg-laying peculiarities of this singular bird. He attempted to prove, and with considerable success, that the egg of the cuckoo agrees in colour with those among which it is placed. That she can voluntarily influence the colour of her eggs! He enumerates the nests of thirty-seven species—to which list the editor of the *Ibis* has added fifteen—frequented by the cuckoo. There is certainly a very remarkable resemblance in many cases between the egg of the cuckoo and those of the species whose nest is selected, though there are notable exceptions, such as that of the hedge-sparrow, whose blue-green eggs bear no resemblance to the colour of *any* egg laid by the cuckoo. In this case, however, it may be that the hedge-sparrow is one of those species more easily duped than others, so that deception of colour is not necessary.

Mr Howard Saunders, in writing of the Great Spotted Cuckoo, a European species, says it invariably deposits its egg in the nest of the magpie. She carries her egg in her gullet, inserts her head into the magpie's nest, and deposits the egg; she then abstracts one of the magpie's eggs, crushes it, and smears her mouth with the yolk; she then returns to the magpie's nest, rearranges her own egg, and leaves it smeared with the broken yolk. Is this a case of deception intended to disguise the scent?

By dissection it has been calculated that each hen cuckoo will lay about half-a-dozen eggs, so that she must find an equal number of nests in a state to receive her own, just before the birds are about to sit. Most other birds lay their eggs on consecutive days, but a special provision is made to enable her to retain her eggs longer than they, seeing it might often be difficult to meet with the requisite number of nests suitable for the purpose. Reckoning five young birds to be the average number found in each nest, it therefore remains that for each brood of cuckoos, upwards of a score of innocents have mercilessly to be slaughtered. We must regard this as a curious freak in nature.

Since writing the above, I have been informed by a practical naturalist that the parent cuckoo devours the young birds that have been so ruthlessly expelled from their dwelling-place, and that it in a great measure depends on such food for subsistence at a period when the eggs of small birds have become scarce. If this be really the case, the difficulty is cleared away with respect to nature's performance of a work which appears to be very cruel, and at the same time without any predesigned object in view. It changes an act which at first sight we are unable to justify, into a wonderful ordination of that Providence Who is mindful of the wants of all creatures.

My friend goes further, and declares that the cuckoo will not unfrequently attack a brood of birds into whose nest no alien egg has been dropped; but its difficulty is to get them out, for the nest even of the hedge-sparrow is so enveloped in thorns as to render access extremely difficult for a bird larger than itself. The cuckoo, when urged, as it is supposed, by hunger, will sometimes tear a nest to pieces, and feed on the young ones. This carnivorous propensity is the more deserving of credence from the fact that there has been for ages a wide-spread belief amongst gamekeepers, that hawks in the spring turn into cuckoos, and that they resume their own shape prior to leaving our shores.

Naturalists tell us that the cuckoo has been observed sometimes to throw out some of the eggs from the nest in which she deposits her own. And no doubt she feasts upon them afterwards; for, though I do not deny that the bird takes caterpillars—chiefly hairy ones—and insects, yet I believe that the eggs of small birds form a portion of its diet, whenever they can be procured. Were caterpillars and insects the sole food of the cuckoo, we should hardly expect her to quit our shores at a time when it is the most plentiful. And assuredly the heat of our summers is seldom so excessive as to drive away a visitor which is known to flourish in higher temperatures than our own. The departure of other migratory birds is regulated by the failing supply of food, and not by a particular day of the month.

The cuckoo has no more to say,
When the sun has reached old midsummer day,

is a saying in the west of England. But though it is quite true that the note of this bird is rarely heard in England after the above-mentioned date, the majority of its companions have ceased their say full ten days or a fortnight before that time. The fact of solitary instances of the cuckoo's note having been heard even as late as September, must not be taken as proof that none of the birds have departed before then. They leave when food becomes scarce; and if, by any means, food could continue to be supplied, there is no reason why they might not remain with us until driven off by downright cold.

Many attempts have been made to keep the cuckoo over the winter, but in most instances without success. Mr Templeton of Cranmore, near Belfast, secured a young one in July 1822, which lived for more than a year in his house, and became quite domesticated. It was generally fed on hard-boiled eggs, and *occasionally* with caterpillars; it would sometimes eat forty or fifty at a time. A seeming treat was a little mouse about one-quarter grown, which it would hold in its bill and beat against the ground, or anything hard, until the animal became soft, when the bird shewed great powers of extending its throat and swallowing. It was at last killed, by being accidentally trodden upon; otherwise, there is no reason why it might not have lived much longer. It seems reasonable to suppose that in this instance the cuckoo was provided with its proper food, eggs, caterpillars, and young mice; which exactly corresponds with what is said above, concerning its aliment in a state of nature. If in captivity it was delighted to devour a young mouse, we may readily conceive that when at liberty it would

be equally ready to enjoy the young birds so unconsciously provided by its own offspring. As an instance of the fascination the young cuckoo appears to exercise not only over its foster-parents, but birds in general, a case is related of a gentleman in Shropshire who kept a young cuckoo in a cage. The bird, however, shewing signs of restlessness, was set at liberty, and for some time afterwards remained perched on some railings in front of the Hall windows. During this time it was constantly visited by swallows, who were repeatedly seen in the act of feeding it, as if it had been one of their own!

THE NIGHT-JAR.

Well do I remember the feeling of awe that filled my mind when on a silent night I first heard the squeaking note of that curious bird the Night-jar or Goatsucker. Surprise and pleasure took the place of awe when, from observation, I found the night-jar to be of a shapely form, covered with a beautiful plumage, speckled with a variety of brown, gray, and white, harmoniously pencilled about the neck, wings, and tail. It possesses a full bright eye; but its mouth is enormously large, and furnished with stiff bristles, which are of great service to the bird on its nocturnal ranging in pursuit of prey.

The night-jar has often been mistaken for the cuckoo, although in habit and character it is much more nearly allied to the swift. It lays its eggs in long grass, generally by the wood-side, attends to the process of incubation, and feeds its young ones, which usually are two in number. This has led some writers to declare that the cuckoo has occasionally been observed to sit on her own eggs and feed her own young; but from the observation of years, I am compelled to maintain a different opinion. The error has probably arisen from a confusion of the identity of the two birds, which somewhat resemble each other in the early stage of their plumage. In the daytime, the night-jar remains on a tree, perched in a peculiar manner, not crossways, but *lengthways* along the branch, and generally head downward. It is extremely difficult to get sight of the bird in this position, and I have sometimes made a search for days without success, even when quite certain of the tree in which it was secreted. In the evening it will fly out to renew its nightly labour, in pursuit of the larger moths, and insects generally. In this chase it is interesting to observe the swiftness and variety of its motions. No bird I have ever seen can tumble so dexterously in the air. The rook, and even the tumbler pigeon, must yield the palm to the night-jar in this respect.

What enables certain birds to perform such evolutions whilst on the wing, is a subject which cannot be satisfactorily explained. Many theories have been advanced, but not one of them is altogether free from difficulty. The middle toe of the night-jar is serrated, having teeth like a saw, and it has been suggested that such a provision has been made to enable the bird to use it as a comb, for the purpose of ridding itself of vermin, with which it is more than ordinarily infested. The same has been said of the rook, but neither she nor the pigeon has the serrated claw; whilst, though herons are so armed, it may be doubted if they can use the instrument for such a purpose.

If it be said that some birds are armed with serrations to enable them more readily to retain their prey, the objection is immediately raised, that the teeth would have inclined backward, and not forward, as is in reality the case. The subject is well worth the close observation of all lovers of nature. The night-jar, like many other unfortunate individuals, has suffered greatly from a wide-spread but ridiculous prejudice. It is known in some parts as the 'goatsucker.' The idea probably originated from the fact of the bird having been seen to extract the larvæ that infest the skin of the goat. Night-jars are migratory, arriving in May, and taking their departure in September.

THE CORN-CRAKE.

Of another neighbour of ours, the Corn-crake, I shall only say a few words. He is a sly and cunning fellow, up to all kinds of tricks in the matter of self-preservation, which, as we all know, is nature's first law, and therefore not to be condemned. His note is very peculiar—crake-crake, crake-crake, and confined to the male bird when calling his mate. This call may be readily imitated by taking a strong comb, such as grooms use in the stable for dressing the manes of horses, and by drawing a nail smartly across the teeth. With a little practice, the bird itself can be deceived, and will come very near to the spot where the person is stationed.

The voice of the corn-crake is heard in the month of May, and, if the season be late, in part of June. Sometimes, on a summer's evening, I have walked full half a mile along a road on the side of some meadows near my residence, and the bird seemed to keep pace with me the whole way, at no great distance within the hedge; if I turned, I could readily imagine it to have done the same. This must have been the trick of a ventriloquist, for I have sometimes asked a friend to remain stationary, or to walk in an opposite direction, and the sound of the bird's voice had precisely the same effect on his ear. This power to deceive two persons who are walking in opposite directions, is really very wonderful. I have wandered about a field in which I knew the bird was located, and have heard its voice before me, and the next instant far behind on the course I was taking; now on my right hand, then on the left; at one moment close by, and almost instantly in the distance. It would have been impossible for the animal, however dexterous, to have placed itself in such various localities, whence its voice appeared to issue, in so brief a space of time. Occasionally, I have suddenly come almost upon it in reality, and then its note was uttered rapidly and with unmistakable feelings of alarm. At the same time I have seen it for a moment, and have traced its course in the grass for a few feet; but run as I would, it was off, and its voice sounded in the distance before I could recover from my surprise. I have known the corn-crake to be run down by the help of a dog, and thus captured. I remember also to have seen an active young farm labourer who pursued one of those birds in an open field for a considerable time, and eventually knocked it down with a stick. In that case, however, the bird had no cover. The hen lays from twelve to fifteen eggs; and in six weeks after they leave the shell, the young birds can shift for themselves. Their flesh is considered a great

delicacy. A bird that lays so many eggs, and whose flesh is regarded as a *bonne bouche*, one should suppose would be in great favour with the *gourmand*. But, as far as I know, they are seldom killed. I have rarely seen them exposed in shops for sale; nor can I ascertain that any persons of my acquaintance are much more familiar with them than myself, as an article of food. And yet they do not seem to increase. They must either be exposed to the ravages of numerous foes, as stoats, rats, weasels, and the numerous catalogue of egg-sucking birds; or, as I strongly suspect, the corn-crake, or land-rail, is much sought after abroad; for, instead of becoming a veritable water-hen, and hibernating at the bottom of ponds, as some believe, it is—like the two other subjects of this paper—a bird of passage, which leaves our shores in October, and crosses the Channel for the continent; though, during the greater portion of its stay in England, it can seldom be induced to take entirely to the wing. For that there is a good reason. When assisted by its wings, like the ostrich, it makes good speed; but in a proper flight it progresses but slowly, with its legs hanging down in an awkward-looking manner; yet, aided by the powerful influence of instinct, this creature will find its way to the south of France or Italy, and return to its old English quarters in the following spring.

COUNTRY JUSTICE.

The following lines, from a poem entitled *Country Justice*, were written by Dr John Langhorne, a clergyman of the last century. The allusion in the last six lines to the dead soldier and his widow on the field of battle was made the subject of a print, which happened to be in the room in which Sir Walter Scott met Burns for the first and only time. On reading the passage—which is printed at the bottom of the picture—Burns shed tears, and Scott, then a lad of fifteen, was the only person present who could tell him where the lines were to be found. The passage is beautiful in itself, but this incident will enliven and preserve it for ever. The print is preserved in the Chambers Institution at Peebles.

For him who, lost to every hope of life,
Has long with Fortune held unequal strife,
Known to no human love, no human care,
The friendless, homeless object of despair;
For the poor vagrant feel, while he complains,
Nor from sad freedom send to sadder chains.
Alike if folly or misfortune brought
Those last of woes his evil days have wrought;
Believe with social mercy and with me,
Folly's misfortune in the first degree.
Perhaps on some inhospitable shore
The houseless wretch a widowed parent bore;
Who then, no more by golden prospects led,
Of the poor Indian begged a leafy bed.

Cold on Canadian hills or Minden's plain,
Perhaps that parent mourned her soldier slain;
Bent o'er her babe, her eye dissolved in dew,
The big drops mingling with the milk he drew,
Gave the sad presage of his future years,
The child of misery, baptised in tears.

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